



**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY  
POLICIES & PROCEDURES**



POLICY NUMBER	
OPR: 21	
EFFECTIVE DATE: 02/19/2014	ORIGINAL ISSUED ON: 11/05/2001
REVISION NO:  3	

**SUBJECT: STATE POLICE SEARCH AND RECOVERY TEAM**

## **1.0 PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines and procedures for the application and selection process for membership in the State Police Search and Recovery Team, and for its utilization.

## **2.0 POLICY**

It is the policy of the Department of Public Safety to maintain an underwater recovery team that may render services in an underwater environment and maintain a fleet of boats to support the state police in its mission to serve the State of New Mexico. Underwater assistance may be provided to other agencies, if approved by the Chief of State Police or his/her designee.

## **3.0 APPLICABILITY**

This policy applies to all commissioned officers of the New Mexico State Police.

## **4.0 REFERENCES**

**NONE**

## **5.0 DEFINITIONS**

- A. Boats** – The New Mexico State Police boats used to patrol New Mexico's waterways.
- B. International SCUBA Standards Organization/Certification** – All team members must hold an Open Water Recreational Diver rating through one of the following organizations recognized through the Recreational Scuba Training Council; Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI), Scuba Schools International (SSI), or National Association of Underwater Instructors (NAUI). This rating does not include Public Safety Diver as it is not equivalent to an Open Water Recreational level certification.
- C. Mission** – Any task authorized to assist or support the Department of Public Safety or other agencies in underwater activities.
- D. State Police Search and Recovery Team** – A unit that provides underwater support activities for the Department of Public Safety, as well as other agencies, for the recovery of drowning victims and/or evidence, or performs other duties necessary to fulfill its role as a police underwater search and recovery unit. These activities comprise the primary responsibilities of the team, but are not limited to them.

## **6.0 PROCEDURE**

- A. Team Organization** – The team is organizationally located within the Special Operations Bureau of the State Police Division. The following are team positions:
  - 1. Special Operations Bureau Commander – A member of the Chief's staff who directs and supervises all specialty teams within the State Police.

2. Team Operations Commander – A member of the State Police Search and Recovery Team appointed by the Chief to supervise all operational and training activities, and reports directly to the Special Operations Bureau commander or designee on matters regarding the team.
3. Assistant Team Operations Commander – A member of the team appointed by the Special Operations commander and approved by the Chief. The assistant team operations commander is responsible for assuming the team operations commander's duties, in his/her absence, and to assist with the operations of the team when the team operations commander is present.
4. Team member – A commissioned State Police officer who has successfully completed the application and testing requirements of the team and been approved by the team operations commander, the Special Operations commander, the assistant team operations commander, or designee.
5. Auxiliary Team member – A commissioned officer or firefighter who has successfully completed the testing requirements of the team and been approved by the team operations commander and the Special Operations commander. Their duties are assigned by the team operations commander, assistant team operations commander or designee.

### **B. Team Activation**

1. The team may be activated under the following circumstances:
  - a. When a State Police supervisor/district commander, or outside agency, determines the need for underwater or boat patrol assistance, he/she will contact the Special Operations Bureau commander, or designee, for deployment of the team.
    1. The Team Operations Commander, Assistant Commander or team designee will then deploy team members to scene.
    2. Updates will be provided to the Special Operations Commander regarding deployment of team, progress of mission or any additional resources required.
2. Use of a boat must be requested by a district commander, or designee, through the Special Operations Bureau Commander, or designee.
  - a. Boats must be operated by New Mexico State Police commissioned officers/agents.
  - b. Boat operators must have completed a boat operators class through New Mexico State Parks or be accompanied by an officer who has completed the class.
3. Search and Rescue (SAR) Activation:
  - a. If a SAR Field Coordinator/Incident Commander determines an incident may involve a possible drowning, he/she will notify State Police headquarters and request the Dive Team Operations Commander or designee to respond to the mission. A unified command system will be utilized to run the water incident. All operations on or underwater will be directed by the dive team.
  - b. If SAR volunteer resources are needed by the dive team on or underwater they will request them through the SAR Field Coordinator in command of the incident.

- c. If there has not been a SAR assigned to the dive mission but additional resources are required then the Dive Team Commander will notify the State SAR Coordinator or designee for permission to activate SAR resources.

**C. Team Applicant Pre-Qualification Criteria**

1. Completion of two (2) years of satisfactory service as a State Police officer and on permanent status.
2. A satisfactory work record.
3. Possession of an open water sport diver certification from PADI or its equivalent.
4. No medical conditions that is contraindicative to SCUBA diving.
5. Auxiliary members are exempt from requirement number 1.
6. Applicant meeting the above criteria must make a written response as required in team vacancy/testing announcement.
7. Upon approval of the applicant's request by the Special Operations Bureau commander and team operations commander, the applicant will be scheduled to attend the next testing process.
8. Boat operators must have completed the U.S.C.G Boat/Water Safety course provided by the Search and Recovery Team or New Mexico State Parks Service.

**D. Testing and Selection** – Applicants must satisfactorily complete the following testing criteria in order to be considered for team membership:

1. A minimum of fifty (50) sit-ups (no time limit, but motion must be continuous).
2. A minimum of fifty (50) push-ups (no time limit, but motion must be continuous).
3. 800 yard open water swim, to shore, with mask, fins and snorkel within eighteen (18) minutes or less (exposure suit optional). Will immediately continue to next test;
4. 200 yard open water buddy tow from shore to waiting boat, remove fins and immediately continue to next test; (no time limit, but motion must be continuous).
5. Ten (10) minute treading water test. (Cannot float must make constant motion in the water without assistance).
6. Complete, to the satisfaction of the team operations commander, open water training skills according to nationally recognized diver certification organization.

**E. Membership** – Team membership constitutes an exempt status and members serve at the pleasure of the Chief.

**F. Certification Training** – Officers/agents selected as team members will successfully complete Open Water One training provided by a vendor selected by the State Police Search and Recovery Team.

**G. Training** – Training is an intricate and necessary part of maintaining the efficiency, safety and readiness level of the team. It is necessary to train in the environments and conditions that will be encountered during missions. The following training is authorized, if the annual budget allows:

1. Summer Training – Annual warm underwater training conducted prior to the peak summer water activity season. Training agenda is the responsibility of the team operations commander.

2. Winter Training – Annual cold underwater training conducted in a winter environment. Training agenda is the responsibility of the team operations commander.
3. Maintenance Training – One (1) eight (8) hour day each month, excluding the months of summer and winter training, in which team members may conduct SCUBA dives for the purposes of maintaining proficiency, determining equipment readiness and gaining familiarity with local waterways. The district or division commanders of the team members must authorize this training time.

Team members will be required to complete six (6) proficiency dives between January 1<sup>st</sup> and June 31<sup>st</sup> and six (6) proficiency dives between July 1<sup>st</sup> and December 31<sup>st</sup> to maintain team and individual readiness. These proficiency dives may be included at either summer or winter dive schools and will be reported to the team commander on the issued Dive Log Form. Failure to complete the required proficiency dives or attend required training will result in the member being deactivated from the team.

#### **H. Duties and Responsibilities:**

1. Dive Team Operations Commander:
  - a. Reports directly to Special Operations commander on matters regarding the team.
  - b. Makes recommendation to the Special Operations commander for the appointment of the assistant team commander.
  - c. Manages and coordinates team training, operations and resources.
  - d. Manages the team's budget.
  - e. Makes recommendation to the Chief, through the Special Operations Bureau commander, on matters regarding selection, discipline and dismissal of team personnel.
2. Assistant Team Operations Commander:
  - a. Reports directly to the team operations commander on matters concerning the team.
  - b. Will be acting team operations commander in the absence of the team operations commander.
  - c. Assists team operations commander with the operational budget and training duties.
3. Team and Auxiliary Members:
  - a. Report directly to either the team operations commander or assistant team operations commander.
  - b. Follow the instructions and carry out the tasks assigned by the team operations commander or assistant team operations commander.
  - c. Are responsible for the maintenance and care of issued equipment, and the immediate reporting of unsafe equipment to the team operations commander.

## STATE POLICE SEARCH AND RECOVERY TEAM

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- d. Are responsible for maintaining their physical and mental condition, underwater skills, and familiarity with issued equipment, so as to be ready to respond when activated.
  - e. Are responsible for their own personal safety; for example, the diver may refuse to dive if, in the diver's judgment, conditions are unsafe or unfavorable, if the diver is unprepared, mentally or physically or if diving violates the dictates of training.
- I. Equipment** – It is the goal of the team to keep equipment in a constant state of readiness and to be accountable for all issued equipment.
- 1. Inventories – An annual inventory of team/boat equipment will be signed and completed by each team member for their issued equipment.
  - 2. Boats – Each boat will receive annual service and inspection. Additional testing and inspections shall be conducted as needed to keep the unit ready for service. Each patrol boat will be assigned to a dive team member, who will be responsible for the upkeep and required maintenance of that unit.
  - 3. Compressors – Each team compressor will receive annual service to include testing for air quality. The tested air must receive a grade "D" as described in compressed gas commodity specifications, OSHA G-7.1-1966. Each compressor will be mechanically tested monthly to ensure proper operations.
  - 4. Lost, Stolen or Broken Equipment – Whenever team equipment is lost, stolen or broken it must be immediately reported to the team operations commander. If the equipment in question has an apparent value of less than one hundred dollars (\$100.00), the incident will be handled by the team operations commander. If the affected equipment has an apparent value of more than one hundred dollars (\$100.00), the form will be forwarded to the Special Operations Bureau commander.
- J. Uniforms, Patches, and Insignia** – See "Specialty Teams" in *ADM: 24 State Police Uniforms* policy, for the appropriate departmental uniform, patches and insignia.
- 1. Dive Team patches/Insignias *will not* be displayed on the class "A" uniform by members that resign from the dive team prior to **five (5)** years of membership.

### 7.0 ATTACHMENTS

NONE

### 8.0 APPROVAL

APPROVED BY: s/Gorden E. Eden Jr.      DATE: February 19, 2014  
DPS Cabinet Secretary